

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 MC-01 EB-04 IGA-01 OMB-01 SAJ-01 ACDA-05

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4219

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 27142

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: MARR, MASS, PFOR, FR

SUBJECT: STEHLIN AFFAIR AND F-104 REPLACEMENT

REF: STATE 248160

1. TO THE BEST OF OUR KNOWLEDGE, NO FRENCH MEDIA
PUBLISHED ANY INFORMATION ON THE STEHLIN PAPER PRIOR TO
THE APPEARANCE OF THE SULZBERGER COLUMN.

2. THE STATEMENT CONCERNING THE UNPROVEN F-1 RELATES
TO THE FACT THAT THE F-1 WITH THE M-53 ENGINE HAS NOT
YET FLOWN. ALTHOUGH THE F-1 WITH THE ATAR 9K50 ENGINE
HAS BEEN OPERATIONAL FOR SOME MONTHS WITH THE FRENCH
AIR FORCE, THE INTRODUCTION OF THE MORE POWERFUL M-53
ENGINE INTO THIS AIRFRAME HAS REQUIRED EXTENSIVE
MODIFICATIONS, PRINCIPALLY TO THE ENGINE INLET DUCTS
AND THE AIRFRAME INTERIOR. THIS VERSION OF THE F-1 WILL
FLY FOR THE FIRST TIME IN DECEMBER. THE STATEMENT THAT
"THIS IS THE CASE 'NOTAMMENT' FOR THE NORTHROP PLANE"
MAY INDICATE A PERSONAL PREFERENCE ON THE PART OF GEN
STEHLIN FOR THE NORTHROP AIRCRAFT, BUT NOTHING MORE.
BOTH AMERICAN AIRCRAFT HAVE UNDERGONE HIGHLY SUCCESS-
FUL QUALIFYING TESTS.

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3. THE EMBASSY HAS NO SPECIFIC INFORMATION ON THE ORIGINS OF THE FIGARO ARTICLE. HOWEVER, ARTICLES APPEARING IN CURRENT ISSUES OF REPUTABLE FRENCH NEWS-MAGAZINES INDICATE THAT THE FIGARO ARTICLE HAD ITS ORIGINS FROM WITHIN FRENCH OFFICIAL SOURCES.

4. ACCORDING TO THE LL NOV. ISSUE OF "LE POINT", A FRENCH NEWSMAGAZINE, "L'AFFAIRE STEHLIN" BEGAN ON 20 OCT WHEN A DUTCH MILITARY ATTACHE IN A BENELUX COUNTRY (OBVIOUSLY BELGIUM) INFORMED HIS FRENCH COLLEAGUE THAT HE HAD A "CURIOUS DOCUMENT" IN HIS POSSESSION AND HE WISHED TO KNOW WHETHER OR NOT IT WAS AUTHENTIC. THE FRENCH ATTACHE FORWARDED A COPY OF THE DOCUMENT TO FRANCE WHERE IT EVENTUALLY FOUND ITS WAY INTO THE HAND OF MR. JACQUES CHIRAC, THE PRIME MINISTER. THE DOCUMENT, WHICH HAD BEEN DISTRIBUTED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC AND FOUR MINISTERS (INTERIOR, INDUSTRY, LABOR AND DEFENSE), HAD NOT BEEN GIVEN TO THE PRIME MINISTER. ACCORDING TO LE POINT, GENERAL STEHLIN HAD ALSO DISTRIBUTED HIS PAPER TO SEVERAL FRIENDS IN THE NATO COMMUNITY, AND FROM THERE IT FOUND ITS WAY INTO THE HANDS OF SEVERAL "AMERICAN JOURNALISTS", AMONG THEM, C.L. SULZBERGER, WHO RAN THE STORY IN HIS COLUMN OF 2 NOVEMBER. AFTER SOME DEBATE BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT AND HIS PRIME MINISTER AS TO THE BEST COURSE OF ACTION, MR. CHIRAC DECIDED, FOLLOWING PUBLICATION OF THE SULZBERGER COLUMN, THAT THE AFFAIR COULD NOT BE KEPT QUIET. JOURNALISTS WERE APPRISED MONDAY MORNING, 4 NOV., OF THE EXISTENCE OF THE SULZBERGER COLUMN AND WERE ADVISED, "IT'S VERY POSSIBLE THAT IT IS TRUE."

5. ACCORDING TO A SIMILAR ARTICLE IN THE LL NOV. "L'EXPRESS", GENERAL STEHLIN PLACED COPIES OF HIS STATEMENTS INTO THE HANDS OF "HIGHLY PLACED FRIENDS WHO CAME TO MY HOME" AFTER HIS CONCLUSIONS FAILED TO AROUSE MUCH INTEREST IN THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT. IT WAS NOT, ACCORDING TO L'EXPRESS, UNTIL 5 NOV. THAT JEAN-PIERRE MITHOIS, MILITARY WRITER FOR THE FIGARO, WAS APPRISED OF THE STEHLIN PAPER, REPORTEDLY BY ELEMENTS OF THE UDR PARTY. IT WAS WEDNESDAY MORNING, 6 NOV., THAT THE CONFIDENTIAL

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STORY BROKE IN FIGARO.

6. AS OF THIS DATE, WE HAVE SEEN NOTHING OF A SECOND STEHLIN PAPER, BUT WE WILL MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO DETERMINE IF SUCH A DOCUMENT EXISTS.
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